

Ipswich Historic Commission
Minutes Meeting, January 11, 2016

In attendance -- Commission members:

John Fiske, Laura Gresh, Casey Wright, Chris Morse

Alternate members:

Ruth Strachan

Anne Page

Lynda Rieman

Town Historian, Gordon Harris

Apologies for not attending: Bryan Townsend and Steve Miles

Chair John Fiske called the meeting to order.

Also in attendance citizens:

Kerri Macklin – spokesperson for the Ipswich Museum spoke in support of restoring the habitat along Ipswich River and Sally's Pond.

The Ipswich Museum owns this property.

Kerry requested the IHC support this effort with a letter.

Kerri provided history of the pond and issues to be improved.

The pond was established in 1974 as Centennial Pond with a grant from the Town. It was renamed "Sally's Pond" for Sally Weatherall in the early 1980s.

It is currently overgrown with invasive plant species.

Proposed is a two-phase project to improve the Pond including relinking it with the Bay Circuit Trail, removal of invasive species, funds to maintain area, and other improvements.

A discussion followed Kerri's presentation by IHC members. Members discussed the IHC's role regarding this project. It was suggested that the IHC write a support letter indicating the significance of this last remaining tract of wetland in Town.

Casey made a motion for the IHC to provide a letter of support referring to the historical significance of the property and in support of linking the trail to make the historic area more accessible for visitors.

Chris seconded. Laura Seconded. All voted in favor.

Minutes:

Gordon motioned to approve the November minutes. Laura seconded. All voted in favor

Casey motioned to approve the December minutes Chris seconded. All voted in favor.

Review of 2015

The first stage of the burial Ground Project is complete. The Town will be reimbursed by Massachusetts Historical Commission now that the photography is complete. Gordon completed photographing each gravestone with 1300 marked graves posted to the Historical Ipswich website. It was noted that 1800 people are buried within the Burial Ground.

The Project was supported by a matching grant with \$15,000 from the Harold Bowen Fund and \$15,000 from Massachusetts Historical Commission

Bruce Lang had documented the burial ground prior to the grant.

APD

Casey noted the smooth transition with the appointment of the APDC members. Casey also commented on the need for the IHC to understand its mandate. He said we have a public relations opportunity and we need not to be seen as obstructionists to change.

Ipswich Museum

Anne met with Deborah Cassidy, Education Chair at the Museum. She spoke of the IM was in the process of deciding what direction to take in the future. Anne spoke of the possibility of a partnership with the schools.

John is a member of the IM Collection Committee.

He clarified role of the IHC and IM saying the IHC maintains historic structures and neighborhoods and the IM maintains historic objects. He said the IHC is not mandated by the by-laws to provide education.

General Impact on Community

John said in 2015 the IHC did not present itself as a coherent commission. The Selectboard did not listen to our recommendations regarding the "High Spirits" sculpture proposal. They voted to place it on the North Green after meeting two months prior and voting against the North Green.

At a meeting with the artist, Glenn Gibbs, and Rick Silverman a decision was made to move the sculpture to a site that would blend with the landscape and not impede the view of the steeple.

It was noted the only positive impact we had as a commission was regarding the Demolition Delay of the East Street property.

Budget

The IHC requested more funding for 2016 for signage and brochures promoting the historic neighborhoods. Our request was declined – reason we did not spend our allotted \$2,000 in 2015. John suggested in 2016 we focus our efforts to promote the historic significance of Ipswich.

Ruth said we should be specific in our requests to the town for more funds to justify a budget increase.

Ipswich River Dam Removal

If the dam is removed, informative signage should be erected to indicate the significance of the dams in Ipswich's history.

Wayfinding Signs

John has contacted the committee to direct the construction of wayfinding signage in town. He thought the proposed signage was inappropriate for Ipswich and that the design decisions have been made.

The proposed color for signage is electric blue. He thought a brown or barn red color more appropriate. The signs include a logo featuring the Choate Bridge. It was suggested that we make recommendations for font and color of the signage to Glenn

John agreed to find out what stage the signage implementation was at.

If we can't influence this signage, in 2016 the IHC should partner with the APDC when designing signage to recognize historic neighborhoods.

In 2016, a goal will be to work to develop a strong partnership with the APD and to support each other in our efforts.

Demolition Delay

The consensus was that the IHC was successful of implementing a demolition delay with contingencies at the property at 64 East Street. The IHC made suggestions and requested involvement in the design of the new structure. Ultimately the owner decided that demolition would not happen.

High Street – Street Modifications

Chair of APDC, Chris Morse wrote to Town Manager Robin Crosby to be part of the process of any redesign of historic High Street. Robin said we should interact with Glenn Gibbs regarding this.

Gordon noted that High Street was once lined with Elm Trees.

Ruth thought we should consult the Shade Commission and look at what other towns have done in historic neighborhoods.

Gordon noted the IHC's role mandated in the by-law to protect historic neighborhoods. The IHC has a mandate to comment and protect historic streetscapes and to protect the historic assets of the Town.

John noted this is an opportunity to work with the APDC.

Choate Bridge

Gordon's participation in the Choate Bridge award was noted. His work provided the community with a beneficial image of and ultimate had a positive impact on the Town.

Mary Conley Ward 2016

Possible candidates include the Ipswich Ale Brewery and the First Church Meeting House.

American Dog Sculpture

John said the now proposed site is the within the Winthrop School grounds.

At 9:11 p.m., Casey motioned to adjourn the meeting, Chris seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Letter submitted by John Fiske on behalf of the IHC re: Sally's Pond

The Ipswich Historical Commission (IHC) has determined that the wetland area at 75 South Main Street is one of the important historical assets of the town. The IHC is thus required to preserve and protect the area.

This wetland area is the last remaining trace of the wetlands that once stretched along both sides of the Ipswich River. Today's downtown was built on wetlands that were drained and filled, and are now lost. This wetland is thus the only remaining trace of the topography of Ipswich that existed before settlement and that continued for at least the first one hundred years of the town.

The wetland is adjacent to other significant historical properties, particularly the Whipple House (1677), the South Cemetery and the Historic Mill District. After its restoration the site will enhance these historical assets and will improve access to them.

The IHC enthusiastically supports the proposal by the Ipswich Museum to restore the wetland at 75 South Main Street and to rid it of invasive, non-native species and thus to return it as close as possible to its original state. The IHC also supports the proposal to restore and improve the walking trail to improve access to the site itself and to adjacent historic sites.

The IHC recommends that the proposal should include the erection of an interpretative/informational sign explaining the historical significance of the Ipswich wetlands. The IHC will cooperate with the Ipswich Museum in the wording and design of the sign.

Minutes adopted February 18, 2016